



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 28, 2005

## 'OPERATION RED PANTHER' CHALLENGES V CORPS AIR DEFENDERS TO MOVE AND SURVIVE

**By Spc. Russel Henderson**

5th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, 69th ADA Brigade

**TAUBERBISCHOWSHEIM, Germany --** The sun had scarcely touched the fresh snow before the Soldiers of V Corps' B Battery 5th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, 69th ADA Brigade, rolled onto their second new site here in five days.



PFC JOHAN TSIGONOFF

A launcher crew from V Corps' E Battery, 5th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery, 69th ADA Brigade slews their Patriot missile launcher during an emplacement drill that took place during Operation Red Panther.

B Battery was taking part in a two-week battalion field training exercise – Operation Red Panther -- that challenged 5-7th ADA to conduct training and evaluations while enduring the unforgiving conditions of this year's harsh German winter.

Maj. Kyle Kolthoff, the battalion executive officer, said each of the batteries and the

maintenance company taking part in the exercise had different missions.

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery went through an Army Training and Evaluation Program evaluation. Bravo Battery conducted air battle management training and maintenance operations, and supported the HHB ARTEP by serving as

an opposing force.

Charlie Battery conducted air battle management training. Echo Battery prepared for several months and executed their Patriot Missile Gunnery Table VIII qualification. The battalion's 19th Maintenance Company conducted several key Survive To Operate] tasks and provided support for the battalion, explained Kolthoff.

"You do your job 24/7 and actually learn your wartime tasks, since you're out in a field environment," said 2nd Lt. Marquai Edmondson, B Battery assistant fire control platoon leader. Red Panther was Edmondson's first battalion field training exercise.

Spc. Julio Rodriguez, an E Battery Patriot launcher operator and maintainer, described the weather as the most dogged obstacle Soldiers faced during the exercise, because fresh snow fell almost every night, but turned to mud by midday.

"I'm not used to the cold," said Rodriguez, "and the mud makes it difficult to roll on and off sites."

"You train for the worst conditions possible: mud, extreme cold," said Spc. Robert Longhauser, a multi-channel transmissions systems operator and maintainer for B Battery.

However, Longhauser said he felt the elements made this field training exercise "a little too realistic."

The headquarters battery's ARTEP evaluation was one of the key aspects of this exercise.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Oscar Turner, the battalion electronic maintenance monitoring officer, or EMMO, described the ARTEP as "a test to let the world know that HHB can survive" on the battlefield. The ARTEP is about seeing HHB at their worst and still able to fight the battle. "While each of the batteries focused on collective air defense tasks, the 19th Maintenance Company trained on Soldier skills.

"Our objective was to focus on a couple warrior tasks, primarily reacting to enemy fire while mounted and night driver's training with [night vision goggles]," said Capt.

Efrain Ramos, the 19th's commander. "Some of our Soldiers had never touched a .50 [caliber machine gun] before. This time every Soldier got a chance to fire one."

Capt. Ramos was pleased with his Soldier's performance. "They came out here and accomplished the training," he said.

"In the middle of the night, right before we moved, my welders spot-welded the handle for the steps at the battalion tactical operations center. Additionally, my [electronic power plant] mechanics were on constant site calls making sure our systems were up and running," said Ramos, highlighting two groups of Soldiers that performed particularly well.

"The battalion has fared extremely well out here in the conditions that we operated under. The weather was challenging with a muddy, snowy and rainy environment. Despite the weather challenges, 5-7 Soldiers were motivated and doing a great job of training for their mission," said Kolthoff.

After the exercise, the battalion returned to Hanau to recover their equipment and prepare for their next mission -- a six-week deployment for a joint air defense exercise.

